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ABSTRACT

Thirty-six second semester freshmen students on academic probation were matched according to sex, high school class rank, S.A.T. scores, and IQ. They were divided into two groups: control and experimental. Both groups were administered the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes, after which the experimental group participated in four one-hour study skills sessions. The members of the control group did not participate in any program. After the last study skills session both groups were again administered the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes. When the differences in scores of the pre-tests and post-tests of both groups were compared, there was a significant improvement in the scores of the experimental group. (Author)

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TITLE OF PROPOSED PRACTICUM

The Effects of A Study Skills Workshop on Second Semester Freshmen on Academic Probation

CORE MODUAL

Curriculum Development

by
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A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title 1

Statement of the Problem 1

Hypothesis 1

Background and Significance of the Study 1

Definition of Terms 5

Limitations of the Study 6

Basic Assumptions 6

Procedure for Collecting Data 7

Procedure for Treatment of the Data 8

Data Resulting from the Study 9

Conclusions and Significance 10

Further Studies 11

Bibliography 13

Appendix

1. Title

The research practicum is entitled "The Effects of A Study Skills Workshop on Second Semester Freshmen on Academic Probation".

2. Statement of the Problem

The problem in this practicum poses the question "Is it possible to improve the study skills of second semester Freshmen on Academic Probation through their attendance at four one-hour study skills seminars?".

3. Hypothesis

The hypothesis states that there will be no significant difference in the pre-test, post-test results of second semester Freshmen Students on Academic Probation relative to improvement in their study skills, when compared to a matched control group.

4. Background and Significance of the Study

Colleges and universities across the nation are faced with several problems in today's society. One of the most pressing problems is that of decreasing enrollment. This problem has arisen for several reasons. In today's society there is a smaller college-age population to draw from. More individuals are questioning the importance of a college education when they see the large number of college graduates unemployed, or employed in some capacity other than that for which they have been trained. Many college graduates are earning less money than non-college graduates. Berendzen, (1968) relates a study completed by the Office of Higher Education for New York State. He outlines three identifying factors contributing to this decline in enrollment; (a) the attitude change in high school graduates concerning the need for a college education, (b) a great amount of publicity concerning the limited job opportunities of college graduates, (c) changes in the

military draft law. The problem of enrollment is faced even more dramatically by private institutions, where public support is virtually non-existent, and costs are constantly rising.

Data collected during a survey by William Jellema, (1971) further supports the fact that enrollment has been decreasing in private institutions. Jellema states that decreasing enrollment affects not only institutional size but financial stability as well. In order to survive, they must incorporate in their regular college functions better studies and attractive academic programs.

Several institutions, both public and private, have begun to research the problem of attrition. The significance of this study deals not so much with the overall subject of attrition. It does, however, suggest that a contributing factor in attrition is the number of students who leave college because they are not able to achieve the academic standards of their institutions. Many also leave because they fail to meet their own goals for achievement. Cope, (1968) relating a study conducted by Walker, attributed one-third of college withdrawals for academic reasons, and one-third to motivational forces. The remaining one-third was attributed to financial difficulties.

Elizabeth Shafer Ph.D., (1969) conducted a study at Madison College to determine if a residence-hall student tutorial-counseling program, combined with a systematic method of room assignment according to ability, would have an effect on low ability freshmen women. Shafer used three groups of freshmen women. Only members of the group which

received special tutoring, and were housed together, achieved above the predicted grade point average. No significant difference appeared in the grade point average of the remaining two groups which were housed with other freshmen, or on campus randomly.

In a study conducted by Caple, (1969) two groups of second semester freshmen who received less than a 2.0 average in a 4.0 system were matched on the composite score of the American College Test, age, and academic load. One group attended a study session which lasted for two hours in duration each evening. The program ran four evenings a week for a period of eight weeks. At the end of the semester, there was no significant difference in grade point average between the two groups.

This study was repeated in the fall of the next academic year including a third group which underwent not only the study sessions, but also received tutorial help. In this study no significant difference appeared in the grade point average of any of the groups. Caple then concluded that organized study sessions have no significant effect upon the academic achievement of students.

Froman Ed.D., (1971) conducted a study to evaluate the effects of peer tutoring and individual and group counseling, with and without reinforcement, on the academic achievement of high risk students. He reported that those students who received tutoring and reinforced individual counseling earned higher weekly quiz grades than those students who did not receive this treatment. The students' final grades were, however, not significantly affected by these sessions.

Some institutions have offered study skills seminars or classes without first conducting action research or pilot studies. This approach

was used at the University of Mississippi. Wilson, (1968) explains this study. Two groups of Liberal Arts students were matched, according to the Composite Standard score on the American College Test, matriculation date, age and sex. One group attended the study skills class, one group did not. Wilson reported that there was no significant difference in academic achievement between either groups. Women, however, did achieve an increase in mean grade point average.

Sykes, (1971) reported his study as one whereby five groups of students were treated in various manners to determine possible causes of attrition. He utilized tutoring, reading instruction, and financial assistance to measure their effects on attrition and grade point averages. This study did not indicate that the grade point average for students in any of the groups changed significantly. It was noted that the reading skills of some of the students did improve, but there was not enough evidence to indicate significant differences.

In conclusion, it seems essential to recognize that institutions feel the importance of such investigation as aforementioned. If grade point average does affect attrition, and decreasing enrollments seem to be a trend, for private institutions in particular, it seems significant that York College should also undertake a similar study. It is, however, this authors opinion that administrators must not only consider the dollars and cents aspect of attrition. There also exists a moral responsibility of the institution to admit only those students who can achieve academic success. If students are not achieving academic success, institutions must investigate the problem.

5. Definition of Terms

The following list of terms are defined for the purpose of this study.

a. Attrition - A reduction of student enrollment as a result of academic suspension or withdrawal.

b. Academic Probation - A student falls into this category when he obtains less than a 2.0 grade point average in a 4.0 system.

c. Freshman students - Students who have earned less than 17 credits and began school in the fall of the year which the study takes place.

d. College Age Population - Individuals who are between the ages of 18 to 23.

e. Control Group - Students participating in research study matched by sex, high school class rank, S.A.T. scores and I.Q. The control group is administered a pre-test, post-test, but does not participate in the study skills program.

f. Experimental Group - Students participating in research study matched by sex, high school class rank, S.A.T. scores and I.Q. The experimental group is administered the pre-test, post-test, and participates in the study skills seminar program.

g. Private Institutions - Educational Institutions which function without, or primarily without public financial support.

h. Resident Student - Students who live in college owned or supervised housing.

i. Study Skills Workshop - Organized presentation of study skills

utilizing lecture/discussion and techniques of practical application focusing on a structured system of study; Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review, (S.Q. 3R).

j. Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes - Survey developed by Brown and Holtzman. Copyright 1967 by The Psychological Corporation, New York, New York, for the purpose of measuring study habits and attitudes.

k. S.Q.3R. - System of study; survey, question, read, recite and review.

l. S.A.T. - Scholastic Aptitude Test.

6. Limitations of the Study

The following are understood to be recognized limitations of the study.

a. The sample was drawn from a restricted population - only those second semester freshmen on academic probation.

b. The study focused on a relatively small sample - 36 students.

c. The effectiveness of the scale used as a measure in the study should most certainly be recognized as a possible limitation.

d. The intervening variables and basic assumptions will also influence the validity and accuracy of the study.

7. Basic Assumptions of the Study

a. It is assumed that because the students selected for the study are on academic probation that there is a problem with their study skills.

b. It is assumed that the study skills which was presented (S.Q.3R.) focused upon the problem which these students are encountering.

c. It is assumed that the students involved in this study attended all four sessions of the study skills workshop.

d. It is further assumed that the students were sincerely interested in each of the workshop sessions and that their attitudes reflected their recognition of the importance of the sessions.

e. It is assumed that the presentations which the senior education majors made were consistent with the standards of good teaching.

f. It is also assumed that the physical facilities where the workshop was conducted assisted to provide for maximum learning to occur.

g. It is assumed that the limitations of this study as previously stated did not adversely affect the results.

h. It is further assumed that the students accurately reported their responses on the pre-test, post-test.

i. It is finally assumed that this study was of significant importance to warrant the time and effort expended in carrying it out.

8. Procedure for Collecting the Data

a. The study utilized two groups of second semester resident freshman students on academic probation.

b. The College records office and housing office provided the names of the students who will fit into the above mentioned groups.

c. Contact was made with the York College of Pennsylvania Education Department to secure the names of senior education majors who would be interested in partaking in the study. Four or the recommended students were selected and made the study skills presentations. Each student taught one session each and re-

ceived a stipend of ten dollars each.

d. The two groups of freshman students were matched according to sex, high school class rank, S.A.T. scores and I.Q.

e. After matching they were labeled a control group and an experimental group respectively.

f. Letters were sent to each freshman selected for the study. These letters explained the study, emphasized its importance to them and the college, and invited them to take part in the program or parts of the program (pre-test, post-test for the matched experimental group) - sample letters included in appendix.

g. Dormitory supervisors and floor advisors were utilized for follow-up to the letters.

h. The pre-test and post-test for each group was the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (1967).

i. After the results of the pre-test were obtained, the four one-hour sessions of the workshop began for the experimental group. After the last session both groups were again assembled for the post-test evaluation.

j. Each of the senior education majors who made presentations had been assigned material which was to be covered. They also submitted lesson plans and lesson objectives for approval before each session.

9. Procedure for Treatment of the Data

The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes was hand scored in the

manner suggested in the 1967 survey manual. The pre-test and post-test results of both groups are compared in the following manner.

a. Number = 36

b. Degrees of freedom = 30

c. Null hypothesis = $H_o : \bar{X} = \bar{X}_2$

d. Alternate hypothesis = $H_a : \bar{X}_1 = \bar{X}_2$

e. Level of significance = .05

f. Critical -t- value = 1.697 (one tailed test)

g. H_o will be rejected and H_a accepted if $t > 1.697$.

10. Data Resulting From The Study

The following is the data resulting from the study.

Table I

Control Group

$n_x = 18$
$\Sigma x = 17$
$\Sigma x^2 = 21$
$\sigma = 0.53$
$\bar{X} = 0.94$
$\sigma^2 = 0.28$

Table II

Experimental Group

$n_y = 18$
$\Sigma y = 42$
$\Sigma y^2 = 194$
$\sigma = 2.37$
$\bar{X} = 2.30$
$\sigma^2 = 5.61$

Table III

Critical -t- Value	Calculated -t- Value
1.697	2.418

Table I deals with the calculations performed on the differences in the pre-test, post-test scores of the control group. It records the number, sum, sum squared, standard deviation, mean, and variance respectively.

Table II deals with the calculations performed on the differences in the pre-test, post-test scores of the experimental group. It also records the number, sum, sum squared, standard deviation, mean and variance respectively.

Table III records the critical, and calculated -t- values respectively.

The null hypothesis can be rejected. The differences in the scores of the pre-test, post-test results of those students undergoing a study skills program, when compared to the differences in the scores of those students who did not, were significantly different.

11. Conclusions and Significance

a. The data clearly indicates that there is a significant difference in the pre-test, post-test results of second semester freshman students on academic probation relative to improvement in their study skills after participating in four one-hour study skills seminars.

b. Implications for York College.

1) The results of this study will lead the college to conduct further research in this area.

2) Other study skills seminar programs may be established in order to serve a dual purpose - to lower the attrition rate

among York College students, and to further develop the skills and attitudes of York College students in a most positive way.

c. Implications for other institutions.

1) Being aware of the limitations of this study, along with the varying results which have been published or reported from other institutions regarding similar studies, it should be understood that significant results may occur. It is the opinion of this author, however, that other variables not mentioned in this, or other studies may have an effect on the results. Some of these variables would be the maturation and motivation factors effecting students.

d. Limitations of the study.

1) The sample was drawn from a restricted population - only those second semester freshman on academic probation.

2) It focused on a relatively small sample - 36 students.

3) The effectiveness of the scale being utilized as the measure in this study.

4) The intervening variables such as individual values and maturation factor along with the basic assumptions may also effect the validity of the study.

12. Further Studies

After discussion with officials in the student affairs division of the college it is apparent that the results of this study are significant enough to warrant further research in this area. The first

follow-up to be considered will compare the first and second semester grade point averages of the students in the experimental group. Though the pre-test, post-test score results were significantly different for this group, application of those skills apparently learned through the program is equally important to know. The grade point averages would be compared again to those averages of the students in the control group.

It would be interesting to study students in their second and third year who have fallen into similar academic situations. They may be maintaining a grade point average just high enough to remain in school, but far from their possible potential. Is it possible that definite study habits and attitudes might be so ingrained in the individual by his second or third year in college that they would be nearly impossible to change?

There are several other studies, too numerous to mention, which would be warranted as either follow up to this study, or similar to this study. It is the hope of the student affairs division to engage in several of these research projects in the next three years.

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YORK COLLEGE OF PENNSYLVANIA

COUNTRY CLUB ROAD, YORK, PENNSYLVANIA 17405

(Experimental Group)

February

Dear

The Student Affairs division of York College is presently undertaking a pilot study to determine the effects of study skills seminars on freshman resident students. You have been selected to participate in this important research study. It will assist you to evaluate your own study skills as well as present some new ideas for your consideration. The results of this study will be not only of importance to you but also to our college.

Four short study skills seminars will be held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons during the weeks of February 24 and March 3. The pre-evaluation will be held on Thursday, February 20, 1975. The post-evaluation will be held on Tuesday, March 11, 1975. All sessions will be held in the conference room of the Administration Building at 4:00 P.M. If you will not be able to attend, please notify my office at the earliest possible convenience.

Thank you for your time and effort in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

John J. Pierog
Director of Financial Aid
Student Affairs Office

YORK COLLEGE OF PENNSYLVANIA

COUNTRY CLUB ROAD, YORK, PENNSYLVANIA 17405

(Control Group)

February

Dear

You are being asked to participate in two study skills surveys. These surveys will be held at 4:00 P.M. in the conference room of the Administration Building on Thursday, February 20, 1975 and Tuesday, March 11, 1975. They will take only a short time to complete and the results will be of great assistance to your fellow students as well as the Student Affairs Division of the college.

Thank you for your time and effort in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

John J. Pierog
Director of FinancialAid
Student Affairs Office